

3-1955

Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: March Report and April Sermons

Herald of Truth

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.acu.edu/hot_docs

Recommended Citation

Herald of Truth, "Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: March Report and April Sermons" (1955). *Herald of Truth Documents*. Paper 62.
http://digitalcommons.acu.edu/hot_docs/62

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Herald of Truth Records at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Herald of Truth Documents by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ ACU. For more information, please contact dc@acu.edu.

Churches of Christ

salute you



MARCH REPORT AND
APRIL SERMONS — 1955

HERALD OF TRUTH

believed it, and felt just as sorrowful as though it had been the truth. Imagine what folly it would have been for Jacob to lay his hand over his physical heart and say, "I feel like Joseph is dead, and therefore I know he is dead. My feelings are a safe guide; therefore Joseph is dead."

In the New Testament we have further proof that feeling is not an evidence of salvation. Paul persecuted the church bitterly—"unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." (Acts 22:4, 5.) Before his conversion, he served God under the Jewish law and was honest in his persecution of the church. He said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1.) Again he said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts 20:9.) Yet he was wrong, for Luke says he was present at Stephen's death, and those who did the stoning laid their garments at his feet. He was a party to the crime. After he became a Christian he said he had been chief of sinners. (I Tim. 1:15.) He was wrong when persecuting the church, yet he thought he was doing right. His feelings did not prove him to be right; they deceived him, for he afterwards learned from testimony that he was wrong. As Jacob and Paul were deceived by their feelings, one feeling bad and the other good, yet both mistaken, we are likely to be deceived if we have no better evidence than our feelings.

Just so we cannot rely upon feelings as proof that God has forgiven us, for feelings often prove too much. They prove to the Hindu mother that she has pleased the gods when she casts her firstborn baby into the Ganges River. They prove to the Spiritualist that he has communicated with the dead. They prove to the Universalist that all men will be saved. They prove to the Penitentes that they should lash themselves with whips, and cut themselves with stones. They prove all heathen religions to be from God, even though some of these religions do not claim to come from the God of the Bible. Can we afford to base our salvation upon evidence that will easily prove heathenism as true as Christianity? We may feel intensely that we are right, and yet be wrong. The intensity of our feelings depends upon the degree of confidence, or faith, in the testimony believed, no matter whether that testimony be true or false. The Moslem who believes the testimony that Mahomet is God's prophet feels as safe as the Christian who rejects that testimony. Human feelings equally support the true and the false. Therefore, they cannot be relied upon as proof of divine forgiveness.

"But," one may ask, "is there any way we can be sure that we are saved?" Yes, there is a very definite way set forth in the New Testament. The apostle John said, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments . . . whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." (I John 2:3, 5.) According to God's word we can be sure that

God is in us, and that we are in Him, when we obey His commandments.

The apostle Paul said, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Romans 8:16.) This Scripture is used by some in an effort to prove that the Holy Spirit comes directly to the human spirit and testifies to it. But this passage does not say that the Holy Spirit bears witness "to our spirit" but "with our spirit", that we are the children of God. These words clearly teach that there is the testimony of the Holy Spirit and the testimony of the human spirit, the one bearing witness with the other rather than to the other. There is precisely the same difference between bearing witness with a person and bearing testimony to a person that there is between talking to a person and with a person. In one instance only one person speaks, while in the other both speak, both testify, both commune, the one with the other. On this occasion I am talking to you, but not with you.

In Romans 8:16 there are two spirits testifying, and not one spirit to another one. In order that it be truthfully said of two witnesses that they "bear witness with each other," it is necessary that they both testify. But if the Spirit of God comes to a person and testifies that he is saved, only one spirit is testifying.

A witness is a person who gives testimony. If one witness testifies with another there must be perfect agreement in their testimony on the point to be decided. The Bible states that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.

In what way does the Holy Spirit bear witness with the human spirit, in proving a person to be a child of God? The Spirit of God testifies by giving us the will of God in the Bible, and the human spirit testifies that it has, or has not obeyed that will. For instance, the Holy Spirit testifies that the first step a sinner must take is to learn of God. The Spirit testified that Christ said, "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him. . . . It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." (John 6:44, 45.) From this language we learn that God draws persons to Christ by teaching them the Gospel. The human spirit testifies that the person has learned of God, and was drawn to Christ by his learning of Him. Thus, the Holy Spirit, and the human spirit bear witness with one another.

In the Bible the Spirit of God testifies that men must believe in Christ to be saved. The faith that saves is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and His word. A person may profess to believe in Christ with all his heart, and at the same time deny His authority and refuse to obey His teaching. Who will affirm that such a person truly believes in Christ? The Holy Spirit testifies that "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." (Romans 10:10.) The Spirit says further

"For without faith it is impossible to please God." (Hebrews 11:6.) The Spirit testified that Christ "came unto his own, and his own received him not; but to as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:11, 12.) In the gospel the Holy Spirit testifies that we must believe in Christ, and the spirit of the Christian testifies that he has believed in Christ.

When we examine the testimony given by the Holy Spirit, we learn that a sinner must repent of his sins to be saved. No man can become a Christian without repentance. Within the Spirit's testimony we read, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3.) True repentance is a change of the heart which results in a reformation of the life, and the Spirit testifies that it is necessary to salvation. The Holy Spirit testifies that the sinner must repent and the spirit of the Christian testifies that he did repent. In this way the Spirit of God bears witness with the spirit of man that we are children of God.

The testimony of the Spirit proves further that the sinner is required to confess Christ in order to become a Christian. The Spirit recorded Christ's statement that "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32.) The Holy Spirit also recorded the statement that "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:10.) The Lord requires every sinner to confess that Christ is the Son of God. The truth expressed in the good confession is the bedrock of Christianity. Without making this confession, in some proper way, no sinner can become a Christian. The Holy Spirit testifies that a sinner must confess his faith in Christ to be saved, and the spirit of the Christian testifies, "I have confessed that Jesus is God's Son." And again we have agreement between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit.

In giving the Lord's will to man the Holy Spirit testifies that penitent believers must be buried by baptism in water in order to have their past sins forgiven. Baptism is made, by the testimony of the Spirit, a condition of pardon. But let us now read some of the Spirit's testimony about baptism. In Matthew 28:19 He said, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In Mark 16:16 His testimony reads, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." The Spirit of God, through Ananias, said to Saul, "Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16.) In John 3:5 He recorded the words of Christ that "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." Thus the Holy Spirit testifies that we must be baptized for the

obtaining of forgiveness, and the spirit of the person who has been scripturally baptized testifies that he has obeyed this command.

In the word of God the Holy Spirit testifies that men must learn of Christ, believe in Him, repent of their sins, confess the Lord, and be baptized for the remission of sins. The spirit of the Christian then testifies that he has done these things. In this way the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. If the human spirit testifies that any one of these commands of the Lord is not necessary, it is contradicting the Holy Spirit.

If the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and testimony of the human spirit are at variance we should remember that the divine testimony is right. If we feel that we were saved without obedience to these divine requirements our feelings are deceiving us.

We should all remember that divine forgiveness does not take place in man's heart, but with God in heaven. Our feelings cannot be evidence of what God has done. If a criminal is being set free, how does he know when the governor has pardoned him? By some happy feeling produced by the governor's spirit directly? Certainly not, but by the governor's words. If the governor of Illinois should say to a criminal, leave the prison, go to the Mississippi River, cross the river and you shall be pardoned, the criminal would know exactly how and when he was pardoned. It would not be true if he should say he was pardoned as soon as he left the penitentiary walls, because he felt happy; neither would it do to say he was pardoned before he crossed the river. His pardon would be in effect as soon as he completed his obedience—by crossing the river. He would then be truly happy as a result of the knowledge that he was pardoned.

God, in the Bible, offers pardon to every sinner. He says we can all be pardoned when we learn of Christ, believe in Him, repent of our wickedness, confess the Lord, and are baptized into Him. When we do these things we can then rejoice in the knowledge that we are forgiven by the God of heaven. The Christian rejoices with joy unspeakable, but his good feeling is the result of the knowledge that God has forgiven him, and such feeling is not the proof of forgiveness. Instead of the Christian laying his hand over his physical heart and saying, "I am sure that I am a Christian because I feel like it here," he lays his hand upon the Bible, and says, "I feel that I am a Christian because I believe and I have obeyed what the Holy Spirit said in His testimony."

THE BIRTH OF THE SPIRIT

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 167

April 10, 1955

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:1-8.)

Nicodemus was the first man to hear the words "Ye must be born again." He marvelled at the saying and men have marvelled ever since his day. They have stood in amazement to see the changed lives of men who have experienced the new birth, and they have marvelled at the depth of meaning in the words of Christ. "Birth" is the beginning of a new life; it is the beginning of life in a new environment. To be a Christian implies a new life; it implies that old things have passed away; that an old life has ceased, and that a new life has begun. This new life cannot exist without a new birth, and that is why Christ stressed the absolute necessity of it.

There are at least two emphatic reasons why the new birth is necessary. The first is the lost condition of man. Isaiah said, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." (Isaiah 59:2.) The trespasses of man have come between him and God, and in this state he is at enmity with the Lord. In this condition he is unfitted to dwell in the spiritual kingdom of God: he is not prepared for the holy relationship of a child of God. The guilt and stain of sin are such that man must be born anew before he can enjoy the spiritual blessings which are in Christ.

The second reason why the new birth is necessary is that we may become like God. He said, "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." (I Peter 1:16.) Holiness is a characteristic of God's nature, but man is unholy in his sinful condition. He must be born again to become holy, and it is necessary that he become righteous if he is to associate with God

THE BIRTH OF THE SPIRIT

Page 9

and Christ. Otherwise he can never have fellowship with the Father and His Son.

Christ says emphatically that "Ye must be born again to see the kingdom of God." A man cannot see the kingdom of God without entering into it any more than a child can see the kingdom of nature without being born into the world. Don't say, "I have a happy feeling; I am stirred and excited," for the creed of Christ demands much more than an emotional uplift. Don't say that you are right with God because you are trying to lead a decent, honorable life, that you are not a drunkard, that you avoid profanity, that you do not abuse your family. All this is not enough. Even self-respecting pagans have demanded these moral standards. To face God, you need much more. "Ye must be born again." Don't say, "Why, my grandfather was a preacher!" or, "My father was a pillar in the congregation!" Family connections and ancestral faith mean nothing as respects your personal duty and relationship to God. Don't say, "My parents dedicated me to God in my infancy." You must dedicate yourself to Him by a complete and unconditional surrender to His demands. Don't say, "My mother is praying for me back home." For your mother's prayers cannot take the place of obedience to God. Kipling was wrong when he sang:

"If I were damned in body and soul,

I know whose prayers would make me whole—

Mother of mine!"

You must get right with God yourself! Christ said, "You must be born again." The responsibility rests upon you for Christ "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:9.)

What is the new birth? It is the great change from darkness and sin to the kingdom of God. It is equivalent to obeying God's will. Christ said, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven." (Matthew 7:21.) To enter the kingdom we must be born again, and to enter the kingdom we must obey the Father's will. Therefore, obeying God's will, and being born again are the same thing. Being born again is the same as being translated into the kingdom of Christ; it is the same as being adopted into God's family; it is the same as being converted. The new birth results in the forgiveness of sins. When the alien sinner comes into Christ he goes through a change so radical that it is called a birth.

There are two essential actions in a birth—a begetting and a delivery. This is true whether we have reference to a natural birth or a spiritual birth. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent in both of these actions in the spiritual birth, and the written word of God is the means He uses in bringing about these actions. In a natural birth life begins

when a seed is planted, and the same principle is true in the spiritual birth. Christ said the seed used in increasing His kingdom is the word of God. (Luke 8:11.) A seed has within it the power to produce life. Every plant in the kingdom of nature is produced by a seed, and every Christian in the kingdom of God is produced by the word of God, the incorruptible seed. In writing to Christians, Paul said, "For in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel." (I Corinthians 4:15.) Paul preached the gospel at Corinth, "and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." (Acts 18:8.) The apostle preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit, and when the people of Corinth heard and obeyed it, they were begotten by the gospel. The inspired writer said, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." (James 1:18.) So Christians are brought forth by the word of truth which is the gospel.

But someone asks, "How can the word of God accomplish the new birth?" In the only way that words can accomplish any change—by being heard, understood, and by influencing the life. The Holy Spirit puts Himself into the words that contain His motives, actions and promises. We have no difficulty understanding how man puts himself into his words. For instance, George Washington put his spirit into the sentence, "United we stand, divided we fall." As long as the American people are true to these words, the spirit of Washington will live in them. But make the same words read "Divided we stand, united we fall," and the spirit of Washington is removed from them. The only way to take the Spirit of God away from the word of God is to add to it, take from it, or change the word so it will not say what the Spirit said in it.

The word of the Spirit is planted in the understanding. It takes root in the conscience, in the heart; and God's ideas, the ideas of heaven, renew our thoughts, our words, our experiences, and thus make us citizens of a heavenly Kingdom. The Divine Will expressed and the Human Will subdued constitute the birth from above. This is why we read in the New Testament that people are saved when they obey the gospel of Christ. This is why the apostle Peter could say, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit. . . Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God. . . And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (I Peter 1:22-25.)

The faithful Christian is glad to join the poet in saying:

"Let the false raptures of the mind
Be lost, and vanish in the wind:
Here I can fix my hope secure;
This is thy word, and must endure."

(Biographies and Sermons, Srygley, p. 373;
Gospel Advocate, Pub.)

Christ made it plain that the new birth involves two elements—

water and the Spirit. The new birth is not dual, but single. It is not two births but one. Some contend that to be born of water is to experience the physical birth, but Jesus was not talking about a physical birth and a spiritual birth. He was discussing the spiritual birth—a single birth, and He declared that it was of water and the Spirit. Both the element of water and the person of the Spirit enter into this single birth!

In the phrase "born of water and the Spirit," the physical birth is not in the picture at all. If by birth of water is meant physical birth, we would have the Lord saying a very meaningless thing. It would be the same as saying, "Except a man exists, and is born of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." It would be the equivalent to saying, "Except a man is born into the world, and is born of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God." The most simple-minded man in the world would not make such an absurd statement as this.

There is nothing in the conversation that Christ had with Nicodemus to indicate that Nicodemus did not understand what the Lord meant by the term "Water." John, the messenger of Christ, was baptizing in the wilderness and preaching the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. All the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem, including many of the Pharisees, the sect to which Nicodemus belonged, went out unto John and were baptized of him in the river Jordan. (Mark 1:4-6.) So many had been baptized, and John the Baptist had said so much about baptism, that Nicodemus undoubtedly knew what Jesus meant by the term "water."

In commenting on the word "water" in John 3:5, Mr. William Wall of the church of England, says, "There is not any one Christian writer of any antiquity in any language but what understands it of baptism. . . All the ancient Christians (without the exception of one man) do understand that rule of our Savior, John 3:5, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God: of baptism. . . All that mention that text, from Justin Martyr down to St. Austin, do so apply it: and many more might be brought. Neither did I ever see it otherwise applied in any ancient writer. I believe Calvin was the first that ever denied this place to mean baptism. He gives another interpretation, which he confesses to be new." (History of Infant Baptism, Vol. 1, pp. 92, 443.)

Albert Barnes, a Presbyterian scholar says, "By water, here, is evidently signified baptism. Thus the word is used in Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5." (Notes on John 3:5.)

Adam Clarke, a Methodist commentator, says in his commentary on John 3:5, "Baptism by water, into the Christian faith, was necessary

to every Jew and Gentile that entered into the kingdom of the Messiah." (Commentary on John 3:5).

Bishop Lightfoot says, "That by water here is meant baptism, I make no doubt." (Whole Works, John 3:5, Vol. XII, pp. 256.)

Sadler says, "The 'water' here alluded to can be no other than that used in the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism." (Church Doctrine—Bible Truth, pp. 53, 54.)

The explanation is sometimes offered that the word "water" in John 3:5 is a symbol for the word of God. But this explanation contradicts Christian scholarship from the first century until now. It violates a well recognized rule of interpretation that words must be given their literal meaning unless the context forces us to the conclusion that they are figurative. It forces us to ask, "What would Christ have used if He had really wanted to say 'water'?" But the Scriptures completely nullify the notion that "water" means "word" for in Ephesians 5:26 the Lord speaks of "the washing of water by the word." Here, the terms "water" and "word" are used in the same passage, and they are obviously not the same.

After Christ explained the new birth Nicodemus asked, "How can these things be?" He wanted to know "How can a birth of water and the Spirit make me a member of the Kingdom of God?" He asked that right in the face of the Lord's plain statement that "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Christ answered his question with a rebuke. He said, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness." (John 3:11.) Christ said, "You don't believe what I am telling you." Does the Lord not say the same thing to people today who ask, "How can water have anything to do with the new birth?"

The Lord says we are born of the water and the Spirit. We are born of the Spirit in the same sense that we are born of our earthly fathers—we are the products of the Spirit. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." (John 6:63.) To quicken means to make alive. The Spirit gives life to the seed which is the word of God. (Luke 8:11.) That seed is planted in honest hearts; it germinates and the process of spiritual birth is begun. The Spirit commands that we be born of water, and we do this by His direction when we are baptized. Paul said, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles." (I Cor. 12:13.) The new birth is "of the Spirit" because it is of "the law of the Spirit." The apostle Paul said, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2.) Paul was made free from the law of sin and death when he obeyed the Spirit's command, to, "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." (Acts 22:16.)

When Christ first said to Nicodemus that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," He was misunderstood.

Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:3, 4.) In this question Nicodemus betrayed the fact that he did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom. He conceived of it as a material, fleshly kingdom, and he thought Christ meant that he would have to experience another physical birth to enter it. But Christ used an illustration to teach this man the nature of his kingdom and of the new birth. He said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3:6-8.) The illustration of the unseen blowing wind shows that the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual kingdom, and that it is the spiritual or inner man that enters it. We can hear the wind as it rushes over land and sea; we can feel its pressure upon our bodies; we can see the oak of immense stature uprooted by it; but no man can see it. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit. We can see the body (that which is born of the flesh) during the whole process of the spiritual birth. We can see that body as it bows in humble submission to the dictates of the inner man; in fruits of righteousness we can see the effects of the spiritual birth; but no man can see the inner man which is translated by the Lord from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of his love. (Colossians 1:13.) It is the spirit of man that is born anew, or changed, in conversion: "for that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The body is the same after the new birth as before. No change at all takes place in it. If the body were changed in the spiritual birth, there would be no warring between the flesh and the "inward man." (Romans 7:15-25.) Our bodies will not be changed and this warfare will not cease until this life is over.

An example of the new birth is recorded in the second chapter of Acts. On the day of Pentecost the apostles preached to people from Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia and other places who had assembled in Jerusalem for a Jewish feast. The sermon brought conviction to the hearts of many of these people and they asked, "Men, and brethren, what shall we do?" The apostle Peter answered, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38.) The inspired writer says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. . . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:42, 47.) Many years after the conversion of these people on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter wrote a letter to them and reminded them that they were born again of the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. (I Peter 1:1, 23.)

A birth involves a family. To be born at all is to be born into a family. When we are born from above, we enter God's family for we

are changed by the Spirit's teaching into children of God. Paul says, "and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:17.) To inherit the blessings of God we must become His children, and we enter into that holy relationship through the birth of the Spirit.

— 22 —

WHAT THE SPIRIT DOES FOR CHRISTIANS

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 168

April 17, 1955

Christianity is differentiated from all the other religions by the fact that it offers its followers spiritual power to help them live up to its precepts. That power is the Holy Spirit, who sets the word of God on fire, warms the church from coldness to enthusiasm, and strengthens the Christian with a power not his own in the great battle between the flesh and the spirit.

Christianity is unique in making this offer. No other religion has any equivalent for it. The Holy Spirit is not obtained from the deductions of logic, the conclusions of philosophy, or from the investigations of science. All these are as silent as the grave regarding His presence and His power. We know of the Spirit and His work solely through divine revelation.

When we turn to the Bible we learn with joy that the Holy Spirit does much for the Christian. Though this lesson is to deal especially with what the Holy Spirit does for Christians, it is well to emphasize the fact that one is made a Christian, in the first place, by the influence of the Spirit. Christ said, "Except a man be born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5.) Here is a definite statement of a radical change, so radical as to be called a new birth. Christ says this change is necessary before we can enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord says a man must be born again. How is this birth accomplished? The Word of God says Christ "came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:11-13.) According to this scripture it is evident that the new birth is accomplished by the will of God.

In reading the Word of God we learn that it is God's will that we

believe and obey the gospel in order to be saved. The apostle Peter says, "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit . . . Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever . . . And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." (I Peter 1:22, 23, 25.)

The Word of God accomplished the new birth in the only way that words can accomplish any change—by being heard and understood, and by influencing the life. The Holy Spirit has put Himself into the gospel, and when the gospel changes our hearts, and brings about obedience, we are born of water and the Spirit. This is all accomplished by the Spirit of God working in and through the gospel. After one is born of water and the Spirit he can say with the writer of the Hebrew letter, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22.)

Another work the Holy Spirit does for the Christian is to make intercession for him. In the Roman letter the apostle Paul said to Christians, "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26, 27.) The intercession of the Spirit is not a work done in us or upon us, but is something done for us before the throne of God. We must not try to explain how the Spirit makes intercession, but Paul says He does it "according to the will of God." This is a fact that appeals to our faith and not to our Christian experience. It "cannot be uttered." We can rest upon it and draw comfort from it as a child draws strength from its mother's breast. Yet, the fact that the Spirit intercedes for us is true even though we cannot explain how the Spirit intercedes for us. We know this because God's word tells us so.

A further work the Spirit performs for the Christian is to "change us from glory to glory." In writing to Christians the apostle Paul said, "But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." (II Corinthians 3:18.) The figure used here by the apostle is taken from the process of mirror-making among the ancients. They did not have the glass mirrors of our day, but a mirror of highly polished metal. When they first started to polish the metal it gave a distorted reflection, but in the process of polishing, that reflection would grow clearer and clearer, until finally a man could behold his face in it perfectly reflected. And so it is with Christians. When taken into the great spiritual workshop of Christianity we are blocks in the rough, but in the polishing process of the church and spiritual surroundings we begin to reflect the image of our Master,

and when we have completed the work, we reflect Him as perfectly as human beings can.

By way of illustration, we mention the two brothers, James and John. At first they were called "sons of thunder" because they wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy men who opposed them, but in the great workshop of the Christian life they grew more and more Christlike, transformed by the Spirit of God, until at last we see the old apostle John at Ephesus, beautified and ennobled, sitting in his chair and saying with trembling voice to the young disciples: "Little children, love one another, for love is of God." In James and John we see the transforming power of the Christian life upon human nature.

Something more that the Holy Spirit does for the Christian is to dwell in him. That the Christian is led, guided and strengthened by the Spirit is admitted by all who believe the Bible. To deny the fact that the Spirit dwells in us is to deny the Bible. The apostles plainly state in the New Testament that God gives the Spirit "to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32.) In writing to the Christians in Corinth the apostle Paul asked, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" (I Corinthians 6:19.) There is no doubt about the Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart of a Christian, but the question is, "How does He dwell there?"

Perhaps we can answer this question more intelligently if we remember that God also dwells in Christians. In the New Testament we read, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (II Corinthians 6:16.) This passage not only says that God dwells in us, but that He walks in us. Is there anyone who would conclude from this scripture that God dwells in us as a person? By referring to Leviticus 26:12, from which Paul quoted, we find that God promised to be in communion with Israel, but there is nothing in the passage to show his personal indwelling in any one person. The Scriptures clearly teach that when the words, thoughts, and Spirit of God are controlling our lives, God is dwelling in us.

But the Bible also teaches that Christ dwells in Christians. In writing to the Christians at Ephesus, Paul prayed "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Ephesians 6:17.) The word "dwell" means "to live, to make his abode." Christ promises to live in the heart of the faithful Christian. Paul said, "Christ liveth in me." (Galatians 2:20.) In writing to Christians the apostle said, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Galatians 4:19.) The Lord himself said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelations 3:20.) So, if we are children of God, Christ is dwelling in us.

But someone asks, "How can this be? How can Christ live in a

Christian? How can He live in me?" The Bible says "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," and God's word teaches that this faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17.) So, Christ dwells in the Christian's heart through the faith which was developed by the gospel. Jesus said, "Come learn of me." Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Colossians 3:16.) Although the Bible states that Christ is formed in us, and that He dwells in us, none would reason that He dwells in us as a person.

The Bible declares that God, Christ and the Holy Spirit dwell in us; but is there any teaching that the Spirit dwells in us in a different sense from that in which the Father and the Son dwell in us? We can all understand that since God and Christ are divine persons, they dwell in Christians through their teaching in the Bible. The apostle John said, "He that abideth in the teaching of Christ hath both the Father and a son," (II John 9), but many people do not think of the Holy Spirit as a divine person. If people would learn to think of the Holy Spirit as they do of God and Christ, much of the confusion would clear away. The Holy Spirit is a divine person; the Spirit of God is God the Spirit. The Spirit is not a glorified "it." It is a grievous blunder to ask God to send "it," or to say that when "it" comes, "it" will bring blessings to God's people. The Divine Spirit is not a fluid, a power, or an influence, but a Great Person. Some have thought that the Holy Spirit is a substance like the mist, the fog, or the wind, that may be sucked into the lungs, and thus by direct impact reach the spirit of man. But the Bible teaches that He is one of the three persons in the Godhead. That He is a person, is made clear from the fact that He speaks, teaches, and guides. He is said to have a mind, affections, and a will. The Bible states that He can be grieved, vexed, despised, resisted, and lied unto. The divine record states that He helped to create the world, and that He has a part in our spiritual regeneration. These things could not be said of a force that is without personality.

Since the Holy Spirit is a Person, we may expect Him to dwell in us just as God and Christ dwell in us. In writing to Christians Paul asked, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of the faith?" (Galatians 3:2.) In this passage the apostle draws a contrast between the law and the gospel. The gospel is called "the faith" since it is God's system of faith, and the apostle's question was asked in such a way that all must see how Christians receive the Spirit. He is received through the hearing of the faith; through the hearing of the gospel. He comes to the Christian through His message, the gospel. He guides and influences the Christian through the written word. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Revelations 3:6.)

But you may ask, "How may I be sure that I have the Holy Spirit in me?" You may be sure of it by meeting the conditions on which the Spirit is promised to you. The conditions of receiving the Holy Spirit as an abiding Guest were ratified in heaven, and the conditions are

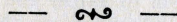
still binding, and the promise is still good. On the day of Pentecost the Lord commanded sinners to "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38.) Since the Holy Spirit is to be the Guest in the sinner's heart, He has a right to dictate the terms on which He will enter and abide. The apostles laid emphasis on the fact that God gives the Holy Spirit "to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32.) In writing to Christians in Galatia the Lord said, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Galatians 4:6.) The Holy Spirit is not given to enable sinners to become sons of God, but He is given to those who have become sons of God through obedience to the gospel. He was promised to believers who repent and are baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38.)

The final work that the Holy Spirit will do for Christians is the "quickening of our mortal bodies." The apostle Paul said, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Romans 8:11.) This Spirit which has ever been with Christians will never leave us until He raises our bodies from the dead and fashions our lowly bodies like unto the glorious body of our Lord. It matters little where and how we die. Our bodies may be buried in the unfathomed caves of an ocean; they may lie upon some mountain-peak or be placed in a crowded cemetery of some great city. No stone may mark our resting-place,—no friend may be able to find the spot and place a flower of love upon it; but that abiding-place is known to the infinite Spirit of God and from our dust he will quicken our bodies and present us faultless before the throne of God.

The Christian may truly say, in the words of Whittier:

"I know not where His isles may lift
There fronded palms in air:
I only know I can not drift
Beyond His love and care."

— "The Eternal Goodness."



THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

By JAMES D. WILLEFORD

Radio Sermon No. 169

April 24, 1955

In the Old Testament the Lord made an important announcement when He said, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour

out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. . . . And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." (Joel 2:28-32.) Many years after this promise was made, John the Baptist repeated it. He said, "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire." (Matthew 3:11.) A short time before Christ ascended back to His Father, He was assembled with the apostles and He "Commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me, for John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:4, 5.)

A few days after Christ promised to baptize the apostles with the Holy Spirit, He fulfilled the promise. Christ had commanded the apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father. They remained in the city as the Lord commanded, "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4.)

After the Spirit came upon the apostles, Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." (Acts 2:16.) Thus the promise of God was kept, and the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Someone may ask, "Why was it necessary that the apostles receive the baptism of the Spirit?" It was necessary that they be baptized with the Spirit to equip them for the work Christ had called them unto. (John 14:26.) The apostles were to proclaim the full plan and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said whom the Father will send in my name he shall teach you all things, so the Lord promised. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, teaching known, but no human being could remember all He said, and the apostles were charged with the task of making Christ's speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Matthew 10:20.) The apostles were charged with the task of making Christ's were not trained orators, and so Christ promised, "For it is not ye that as we know not one of the twelve could be ranked as a scholar. They were to go forth and face the scholars of the world and yet so far enjoyed any training for such work in the schools of the world. They could or would undertake such a work without divine help. They were world for the Lord. No twelve men ever born, without money or power, to do. They were chosen to unfold His teaching, and to conquer the

of salvation to lost men. Jesus came to plant a new thought in the mind of the world—an empire based on love, which was finally to include the whole world. For this to be accomplished the whole truth must be preached and therefore Christ promised the apostles that "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." (John 16:13.) With the truth the apostles went forth and produced the mightiest spiritual revolution in history, in the very face of the enemies of Jesus and in the very city where they had crucified Him. Jerusalem had often fallen under the power of mighty foes; now it had fallen under the power of a mighty Friend! Christ sent the Spirit into the apostles to reveal to them the truth of the gospel and thus He made it possible for the Holy Spirit to continue His work through the truth proclaimed and recorded by them, until the end of time.

The Holy Spirit continued with the apostles till the end of their ministry, bringing all things to their remembrance that Christ had spoken unto them. Under the supernatural guidance of the Spirit they preached the gospel to the nations of the earth, and established many churches of Christ. They wrote the epistles to the churches and gave to mankind the New Testament, "the perfect law of liberty". The apostles were baptized with the Spirit that they might be infallibly guided in their preaching and writing. They were the Lord's mouthpieces, and as such the Spirit spoke through them. Christ said to the apostles that "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Matthew 10:19, 20.) It was necessary for the apostles to receive the Holy Spirit that they might be God's spokesmen.

There are two cases of the baptism of the Holy Spirit recorded in the New Testament. Thus far in our lesson we have given our attention to the baptism of the apostles, who were Jews. And now we turn our attention to the tenth chapter of Acts which records the baptism of certain Gentiles with the Holy Spirit. In this chapter we read that Cornelius was told by an angel to send to Joppa for Simon Peter who would tell him what to do. Cornelius immediately dispatched messengers to bring the apostle to Caesarea. In the meantime God performed a miracle to convince Peter that he should go to the Gentiles, and so he was made ready to accompany the messengers. He went with them to the home of Cornelius and as he began to speak the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles. The Bible record states "And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 10:45.) This was a momentous day in the history of the heathen world! The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles proved that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35.) The gift of the Spirit demonstrated that the

Gentiles were subjects of the gospel of hope, and when the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem later heard what had happened "They held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11:18.) The gift of the Spirit to the household of Cornelius was God's method of opening the door of faith to the Gentile world.

The outpouring of the Spirit upon Cornelius reminded Peter of the promise Jesus made concerning baptism of the Holy Spirit. He said, "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit." (Acts 11:15, 16.) It is significant that Peter had to go all the way back to Pentecost to find another occasion like this outpouring on Cornelius. The fact that he referred to the "beginning"—Pentecost—for a like occurrence shows that from that date till the incident at the house of Cornelius there had been nothing like it. He had to go back to Pentecost because there were just two cases of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The scenes of Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius were never reproduced during the lives of the apostles, and never have been since in any land or on any occasion.

Someone may ask, "But did not God promise to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh?" Yes, that promise was made in Joel 2:28, but it was fulfilled when Jews and Gentiles were baptized with the Spirit. When God said that He would bestow His Spirit upon "all flesh", He did not mean "all" in the absolute or unlimited sense. In I Corinthians 15:39 the Lord said, "There is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." If God meant that He would pour forth His Spirit upon all flesh in the unlimited sense, He would bestow His Spirit upon animals, fowls and fishes. But did God mean that He would give His Spirit to all human flesh? If so, He must pour out his Spirit upon liars, adulterers, thieves and drunkards. No one believes that God promised to bestow His Spirit upon all flesh in an unlimited sense.

When the Jews on Pentecost and the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius were baptized in the Spirit, God's promise was fulfilled. "Jew" and "Gentile" were self-excluding terms which together included all humanity—"all flesh." There were just two nations before God. All who were not Jews were Gentiles—just two families of men before the Lord. When the Spirit was given to a representative group of Jews on Pentecost and a representative group of Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon "all flesh." Thus, the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled, and the promise of God was kept. Not another single occurrence was required for its fulfillment.

It should be borne in mind that the baptism of the Spirit was not to save a single soul. The Spirit was not given to the apostles to save them, for they had been disciples of Christ for three and a half years, and He was going to intrust the great work of proclaiming

the gospel to the whole world to their care. The Lord had said to them, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3.) The baptism of the Spirit was not to save the apostles, but to equip them for the work they were to do in establishing Christianity in the world.

The baptism of the Spirit was not to save Cornelius and his friends, for the angel had said to him that Peter "shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house." (Acts 11:14.) Cornelius and his house were saved by words, by the gospel, preached, believed and obeyed. The angel, the messengers of Cornelius, Cornelius himself, and the apostle Peter all testify that the Gentiles were saved by the word of God. (Acts 10:6; 10:22; 10:32; 11:14.) Let us remember that, in order to be saved, men must call on the Lord; but in order to call on Him they must believe, and in order to believe they must hear the gospel. (Romans 10:13-17.) In Acts 11:15 Peter says the Spirit came as he began to preach. When the Gentiles were baptized with the Spirit, Peter had not preached, they had not heard, and therefore had not believed, so their baptism in the Spirit did not save them—it only opened the door of faith to them and to all other Gentiles. Since that hour, there has been no people who needed a baptism of the Spirit, as the door of faith has never been closed to any nation, tribe or tongue.

Many labour under the impression that God has commanded them to be baptized with the Spirit, but we must learn that the baptism in the Spirit was a promise, and not a command. Not one human being was ever commanded to be baptized in the Spirit. It was a definite promise to certain individuals, and it was to take place within a short time after Christ ascended.

There had been two baptisms on Pentecost and two at the house of Cornelius, but in A. D. 64 Paul said, "There IS one baptism." (Ephesians 4:5.) Holy Spirit baptism had ceased when Paul wrote that statement. The one baptism was the water baptism of the great commission which was to last "to the end of the world." (Matthew 28:19, 20.) When Jesus gave the commission to the apostles, he said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Only the Lord could baptize with the Holy Spirit, but the baptism which is to last to the end of the world is to be performed by men. The only baptism men are authorized to perform is in water. Therefore, we must conclude that the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 is baptism in water.

At this point some of you may ask for an explanation of First Corinthians 12:13 where Paul said, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." When we follow the instruction of the Spirit, and baptize men and women into the body of Christ, the church, they are baptized by the Spirit. It is spoken of as by the Spirit because He directed that we be baptized. It

is by the Spirit because it is done in His name. (Matthew 28:19.) When something is done by the authority of the Spirit, the Spirit is said to do it. In the third and fourth chapters of John we read that Christ baptized but that He did it through His disciples. (John 3:22; 4:1, 2.) They performed the act of baptism with their own hands, but it was Christ who did the baptizing inasmuch as He authorized them to do it. When men build a bridge by the authority of the state we say the state built the bridge. It is on this principle that Paul says, "By one Spirit are we all baptized."

In commenting on First Corinthians 12:13 an outstanding scholar of the Methodist Church says, "This probably refers to baptism by water. For we have here no suggestion of any other than the ordinary meaning of the word baptize." (*Christian Baptism*, by Beet, p. 18: Quoted in *Hand Book on Baptism*, by Shepherd, p. 393.)

Another important lesson for us to remember is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not to purify the soul of man. It was not performed for that purpose. In every instance in which the word "purify" is found in the New Testament it is an act of the personal volition—something in which men have a part. In James 4:8 the inspired writer said, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded." The apostle Peter said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth." (I Peter 1:22.) The apostle John said, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (I John 3:3.) One scholar has said, "Men must . . . purify their souls in obeying the truth. The Bible teaches that this is God's way of purifying sinners." (*Addresses*, by H. R. Pritchard, p. 323; Quoted in *The Spirit and the Word*, by Sweeney, p. 51.)

In closing our lesson we go back to Matthew 3:11 where John said, "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire." It should be borne in mind that there were two baptisms announced by John; one in the Holy Spirit, and the other in fire. John was preaching to a mixed multitude composed of those who would accept his teaching, and of those who would reject it. Those who accepted the teaching of John, became disciples of Christ, and as such some were chosen by Him as subjects for the baptism of the Holy Spirit; while those who "rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized of John," also rejected Christ, and thus became fit subjects for the baptism in fire. After John speaks of Christ baptizing in the Holy Spirit and in fire, he said, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshingfloor; and he will gather his wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3:12.) The chaff represents those who rejected the word of God, and the wheat represents those who accepted it. The baptism in the Holy Spirit applied to those who accepted the teaching, and the baptism in fire applied to those who rejected it. Beyond a doubt the wicked will

receive the baptism of fire, to which the Lord referred, when He said, "And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:14, 15.)

We can be sure that the baptism in fire did not apply to faithful disciples of Christ for when He quoted John's statement and applied it to the apostles, He said, "For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." (Acts 1:5.) Christ left out the baptism of fire because He was talking to His disciples who had obeyed His will. John mentioned it because some in his audience would be baptized in fire for rejecting the will of God.

There is not a single instance in the New Testament in which a baptism of fire is used to denote a spiritual blessing conferred upon the good. It is connected with judgments, punishments, and with hell itself. Paul warned that Christ will come "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Thessalonians 1:8.) It is our plea that you will believe in the Lord, repent of your sins, confess your faith in God's Son, be baptized into Him, and continue in the faith that you may escape the baptism of fire which is reserved for the wicked.

**HIGHLAND CHURCH OF CHRIST
RADIO PROGRAM
Fifth and Highland
P. O. Box 1858
ABILENE, TEXAS**

Non-Profit Organization

**POSTMASTER:
FORM 3547 REQUESTED**

RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED